

Indoor/Outdoor Chores Prepare Home for Winter Cold

With cold autumnal air moving in fast, the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH, www.pathnet.org) is providing some basic suggestions for home owners to make their homes cozier and more energy-efficient this winter. A weekend of preparation can make for a much cozier (and less expensive) winter.

Among indoor chores recommended by PATH:

- Add a second layer of insulation to the attic, following levels recommended by Energy Star (www.energystar.gov). To maximize the effectiveness of the insulation, the attic floor should be air sealed.
- Consider installing storm windows and doors, especially if windows are older, single-pane models not made from modern insulated glass.
- Seal the attic fan opening with an airtight cover, adding insulation so that there are no insulation gaps around the cover.
- Get your furnace checked and tuned-up by professionals to keep the system operating at its optimum efficiency, a step that can save hundreds of dollars in heating costs.
- Refill ionization-type water heaters with salts.
- Clean wood-burning heaters by: scraping the interior, especially nooks and crannies, with a wire brush; checking for cracks and repairing any with stove cement; cleaning the exterior completely; vacuuming the blower, if it has one, and oiling the motor; and replacing any filters.

Outdoor/indoor chores include:

- Cover room air-conditioning units with an insulated cover inside and outside, or remove the unit from the wall and seal the opening.
- Drain outside hoses and close the shutoff valves to outside faucets and waterlines.
- Check the weather stripping and caulking on all windows and doors for damage and tightness of fit, replacing it if there are gaps or cracks.
- Clean the fireplace and chimney, which is easiest to do by hiring a good chimney sweep.
- Learn how to lower your heating bills during the winter.

Chores outside the house include:

- Remove debris from gutters and downspouts.
- Check the gutter and downspout alignment to ensure that rainwater collects properly in the gutters and drains away from the house quickly and easily. If water doesn't drain the way it should, the downspouts should extend at least three feet away from the foundation, and six feet is better.
- Make sure waterlines and hose bibs are protected from freezing.
- Check the exterior for cracked or peeling paint, and repaint if necessary, which will help protect the wood from rot.